

# Unity Stated.

The only Means to it

ASSIGN'D and ARGU'D.

TOGETHER

With the Motives pressing it.

IN A

# SERMON

BEFORE THE

Worshipful Company of *Salters, Lond.*

In *St. Swithin's Church, Sept. 1683.*

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By *WILLIAM BASSET*, Rector of *St. Swithin, Lond.*

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*Earnestly recommended to the perusal of all*  
**DISSENTERS.**

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**L O N D O N,**

Printed for *Walter Davis* in *Amen Corner. 1683.*

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ASSIGNED and ASSIGNED

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With the Minutes

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SERMON

BEFORE THE

Worshipful Company of Salters, London

In St. Andrew's Church, Sept. 1685.

By WILLIAM WATSON, Minister of St. Andrew's Church, London.

Heartily recommended to the perusal of all  
DISSENTERS.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Walter Davis in Amen Corner. 1685.

## PSALM 133. I.

*Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is :  
Brethren, to dwell together in Unity.*

**T**HIS Text is a *Thesis* from whence the other parts of the *Psalms* are discours'd, but is not itself deduc'd from any preceding matter. Therefore without any farther introduction, I shall observe in it,

First, The subject matter of it, *Unity*; and

Secondly, The duty we owe it, *viz. to dwell together in it.*

*— dwell together in Unity.*

Which is press'd upon us by no less than five Arguments; whereof the

First, Is drawn from that common Relation we all have one to another, in that word, *Brethren*; the

Second, From the advantages of doing so, it is good; the

Third, From the comforts and satisfaction that arise from such a Life; it is joyful.

Fourthly, The whole is brought in with a *Behold*, which points it out as a thing worthy our notice and observation; *Behold it is good* —

Fifthly, The manner of its proposal farther speaks its excellency; in that particle *How*.

*Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is: Brethren, to dwell together in Unity.*

1. The subject is *Unity*, which falls under a three-fold Consideration, *viz.* of *Judgments, Affections, and Peace.*

1. There is an *Unity of Judgment*, which the great Apostle both describes, and pathetically presses on us, *1 Cor. i. 10. I beseech you, Brethren, by the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things; that there be no Divisions amongst you, but that ye be all perfectly joyned together in the same mind, and the same judgment.* To which end, as the Sacred Scriptures have given us a Form of Prayer, and a Summary of the Commands; so it was the early care of the Church to make a Collection of the main Articles of Belief, that we may all come in the *Unity of the Faith, and knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man.* That there might be no Jars and Discords, but a sweet consent of Notions, Worship, &c. in the Christian Church. That our Assemblies might be like those of the first Christians, who met together *ἐν ὁμοθυμαδόν*, with one mind, as well as in one place.

Though indeed difference of Constitution, Education, and Converse; difference of parts, both natural, and acquired; the ambiguity of some Phrases, and Texts of Scripture; and the many impostors Men meet withal; will no more suffer their minds to be all proportionate to the same rule, than their Bodies were to *Procrustes* his Bed. For we find difference between even *S. Peter*, and *S. Paul*; and between particular Churches themselves. Difference about *Mosaic Rites* occasioned that famous Council, *Acts 15.* Difference about the time, and manner of the Fast of *Lent*, when the thing was received by all the Churches, as an *Apostolical Tradition*, had almost rent the Church in pieces



pieces. Nor did they dispute only some indifferent things, and the Sense of Scripture, but even the Canon it self; for the Epistles of *S. James*, the 2. of *Peter*; the two last of *John*, and the *Revelations*, were not received by all of a long time. No Canons, Councils, Edicts, or any means imaginable, could ever yet make all Men of the same mind.

I know the impossibility of the thing is made an Argument against all endeavours that way. But for the same reason, we should no more press Men to *live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly* in this present World, because we find an equal impossibility of obliging all Men to these indispensable Duties. The difficulty of the thing rather speaks it a Duty, while the easiness of the contrary is from its suitability to the Looseness, and Debaucheries of Humane Nature. Nothing is so hard to do, as what we ought to do; and the best things are usually the most difficult. Therefore we should press toward this mark; and if we fall short through weakness, or want of better means, allowances will be made; for God requires no more than according to what a Man hath: And he usually secures such that are not willfully wanting to themselves, from any mistakes, dangerous to themselves, the Church, or Society they live in. But if any out of idleness, humor, or an unreasonable conceit of their own light and reason, fall into false and mischievous Opinions, he leaves 'em to their own Inventions, to make and believe a Lye; without any excuse or mitigation, either of Sin or Punishment. The case is like that of *Perfection*, which is set as a mark for us all to aim at; if we honestly endeavour, and cannot attain, the Will is accepted for the Deed: But if we proudly, or idly neglect the means appointed, what we fall short of will be imputed as a wilful Sin.

Therefore the Scripture is so pressing in this particular, *Eph. 4. 4, 5, 6. There is one Body, one Spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, and one God, and Father of all* : For which reasons, *v. 3. We should keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace* : Having but one Mind, one Religion, and one Church amongst us all. Diversity of ways is unsuitable to all these Unities. When in *1 Cor. 1. 12.* Men pleaded *I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, &c.* he immediately argues *v. 13. Is Christ divided ?* Is there difference and opposition in him ; that there is such difference and opposition among his Disciples ? Is the Doctrine he taught dissonant from it self ; are there any Discords in those Sacred Truths, that there is so much diversity and variance amongst them that profess it ? Is the head divided, that there is so much division in the Church, which is his Body ? Certainly difference of Opinion, falsely called Religion, and opposition of Professors, are a reproach to a God of Unity and Order ; and a Scandal to that Gospel, which teaches but *one Faith, but one Baptism, and but one God.*

Now because Men must be supposed of themselves lyable to delusions, and mistakes ; therefore the Scripture hath given us a rule, which ( if we follow ) will secure us from all material Errors, that may be reasonably judg'd a breach of this Unity ; and that is to follow the Conduct and Customs of the Church. For when the Spouse inquires of our Saviour, where she should find him ; he answers, *Cant. 1. 8. Follow the footsteps of the Flock ; and feed thy Kids by the Shepherds Tents.* And when there was a difference between the Jewish, and Gentile Converts, about Mosaic Rites and Ceremonies, which matters the people could no way determine, nor be satisfied by their Teachers, even they themselves differing in the same points ; a Council is assembled at *Jerusalem, Acts 15.* who decree, that as to  
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the things in Controversie, they abstain from *things strangled*; and from blood, Ver. 10. which implies both the power of the Church to determine, and the duty of the People to receive, and abide by such determinations. Our Saviour promised the Apostles, *Matth. ult.* *That he would be with them to the end of the World*; that is, with them, viz. in their own Persons and Successors; because they were no otherwise to continue to the end of the World; and because God is not Essentially only, but even Graciously present with all good men; therefore this promise made to the Apostles at the very time of their receiving their Commission of *Baptizing, and Discipling all Nations*, must imply something beyond the common grants made to the World; and that is *with them* in a sufficient way and manner for the Founding, Guiding, and Governing his Church: And when the Canon of Scripture was completed, the many differences from age to age, which yet have pleaded Scripture for their warrant, do abundantly prove, that the Scripture of itself is no more able to hinder and determine differences, than the Law to prevent and decide Controversies without a Judge; therefore there being a promise of sufficient Aids, and the same necessity of Councils and Synods in after ages, as there was then, the Church hath ever look'd upon herself sufficiently impowered to follow this pattern in the *Acts*. Sometimes after this, when St. Paul, *1 Cor. II.* had been pressing matters of Decency in places and times of Divine Worship, as for men to be Uncovered, &c. he adds, Ver. 16. *If any man seem Contentious, i. e. not willing to abide by what hath been said, but is disposed to Cavil, let him know, we have no such Custom, neither the Churches of God*: Whence it was the Apostolical practice, and a rule left to all Posterity, to correct the Errors and Cavils of particular persons, by the

the custom and practice of the Church. Which was so well observ'd of old, that as *Eusebius* relates, and *Origen* somewhat to that purpose; it was then pleaded, ταῦτα τὰ ὁγμὰτα δούμμενα ἐκ τῆ ἐκκλησίας, these things are dissonant from the Church; a sufficient reason to reject 'em. Nor was there less than an Anathema added to her determinations; a Curse upon all them that should refuse 'em. We find the Church of *Thyatira* was commended, *Revel. 2. 19.* for her works, and charity, and service, and faith, and patience — but yet, *Ver. 20.* *I have a few things against thee; and why? because thou sufferest that Woman Jezebel, which calls herself a Prophetess, to teach and seduce my Servants* — Whence that Church had a Power (and it was her Sin she did not use it) of obliging her Members to such a rule that might have been effectual for the excluding these, and by parity of reason, all like Errors. There was then no plea of Liberty of Conscience, and judging every one for himself, allowed of; things that were invented for the promoting Schismatical Parties, and the serving every one his own humor and interest. And indeed it is so necessary to the ends of Religion, and the very being of a Church, to have this our rule, that it is therefore become the common practice of the World. And those who now join in their common crys for Liberty, when time was, would by no means allow it one to another.

It is true indeed, if the Church determine and impose upon men, as terms of Communion with her; things that are apparently repugnant to any proper and express Text of Scripture; then, and then only, that question comes honestly in, *Whom shall we obey, God or Man?* Which is the only Argument Protestants have to justify their departure from the Church of *Rome*, as in those instances of adoring the Creature, where the Church commands, and the Scripture forbids. But if there

there be no such apparent repugnancy, as there cannot be in things of an indifferent Nature, which are the ground of our Controversies, because these are no where forbid in Scripture; though a man cannot perhaps give a reason of all the Churches determinations, or expose every Sophistical plea against them, yet there being no such apparent repugnancy, I ought to submit and follow her Judgment and Authority; in doing which I follow even God himself, who hath made her my Rule and my Guide. Therefore if a Question be moved about the Doctrine of the Church, contained in the 39 Articles; or about her Rites and Ceremonies, contained in the Canon and Rubrick; it is a grand mistake in any to think, that if they meet a man, who cannot prove and justifie all those things, that they may be rejected; for the Church may in all reason be suppos'd to see more than Individuals may. I receive 'em from her, and it is enough to justifie my doing so, that I have no plain Scripture against them: It lies upon the adversary, as a Member of this Church, to justifie his dislike, or else to receive 'em too.

For whatever the Church defines and imposes, must be either *true, false, or doubtful*: If *true*, we must obey, because the command falls upon a Lawful matter; else we make the Command to alter the Nature of the thing, and the Sin to lie in Obedience, which would quickly disturb all Societies, and overthrow every Government in the World. If *false*, then prove it. Which must be either,

1. by some plain demonstration that may even force assent; or,
  2. By some plain and proper Texts of Scripture, which either expressly or by undeniable consequence, forbids or commands the contrary. For even Murther it self had not been unlawful, unless forbid by the Divine Law,
- either

either natural or revealed. *Ergo*, if there be no such Law against the Definitions and Impositions of the Church; there is nothing that can speak them false and unlawful. But if any think there is some such Law, let them produce their instances; which we are certain none can do, because all their attempts that way have been hitherto baffled; whence some have denyed reason in matters of Religion, because they have none for their own placits: And others fled from Scripture, as not serving their wild Hypotheses, to downright *Enthusiasm*, and a *Light within*. Or,

3. By shewing us such a perfect rule, as to Government, Worship, and all particular things requisite for the gathering, governing, and maintaining a Sacred Society, laid down in Scripture, that there can be no room left for any Humane Constitutions. But because all parties differ so notoriously about these things we presume there is no such perfect rule at all: And therefore room left for any such Humane appointments that are not contrary to the reasons of Mankind; or to any part of Divine Revelation. But

3. If *doubtful*, either in their own natures or circumstances; we ought in Prudence, as well as Duty to believe the Church, rather than our private Sentiments; else we make our selves more wise and judicious than the Church it self, which is the very height of Pride; and likewise a charging infinite wisdom and goodness, in appointing us so weak and treacherous a guide.

Nor do we in this give any farther power to the Church, than what the very *being* of Councils and Synods doth suppose to belong to her. For their being doth imply their power of determining in doubtful and controversial matters, and therefore of giving rules in such cases; which rules and determinations the people consequently stand oblig'd to observe: For power



of giving Laws in the Superior doth always infer a Duty of receiving 'em in the inferior, and you will find that not only ancient Councils, but the Synod of *Dort* about the Doctrins of *Arminius*, and that undue Convocation, which the *Scotch* taught us to call the *Assembly of Divines*, which laid aside the *Liturgy*, and established the *Directory*, did very smartly evidence their belief, that they had a power of obliging the people to their own placits. For beside the greatness of the undertaking, they were as positive in their determinations; and as severe in their injunctions as if they knew themselves seated in an infallible Chair. Therefore their allowing such a power, when it ministred to their own passions, and interest, doth evidence that they hold the thing not absolutely unlawful. From the faults that Dissenters now find with Ecclesiastical Establishments, and that monstrous Bill for uniting the Kings Protestant Subjects prepared by a late House of Commons, which designed the turning our Church upside down, we must in all reason conclude, they would make very great, and peremptory Alterations, was it in their power. Whence we must infer, that according to them themselves, there is such a power lodg'd in the Church. Which if they deny, they consequentially deny the lawfulness of the Reformation, both in its first settlement before, and in its Restauration, after *Queen Mary*; they condemn the haughty attempts of their late *Assembly*, and even themselves too, who put in their objections against some little passages in our *Liturgy*, to the Convocation called soon after his Majesties return; and likewise take from the Church all power of future Reformation from any Errors she may sink into.

And indeed it is reasonable to suppose the Church knows what is Lawful and Expedient, better than some private Heads. For the Persons called as Representa-



tives of the whole Church, are usually the most Grave, Learned, and Judicious ; many see more than one ; God hath more regards to the whole, whom these (duely called) do represent ; and in whose determinations the whole are concern'd ; than of a part, *viz.* a few scattered Individuals, who are every one for his own Sense. He stands in those relations to the whole, which he doth not to particulars in separation from her, as of an *Head*, an *Husband*, &c. and hath promised to be *with them to the end of the World*, as they are the guides and pastors of his Flock, and therefore in a more peculiar manner, than with any private Persons who are concerned not for all, but every one for his own self. Therefore though the Church may err, yet it is not by incomparable odds, so likely she should, as that a few divided particulars may. Therefore it is my Prudence as well as Duty, in all things doubtful, to submit to the Church ; else I run into an apparent Schism, which nothing can justify, but some apparent Evil, which I cannot hold Communion with the Church, but I must be polluted by. Therefore because the Schism is apparent, but the Error not ; I run into a certain Sin, only for fear of what seems to me a probable Error.

Now suppose that by this means I chance to err with the Church yet I have used the means, and kept to my guide ; and consequently have done the best I could to secure my self from Error ; and for that reason my Sin is only from weakness, in that I could not see the Error of my guide ; therefore I shall be excused *à tanto*, and forgiven upon a general repentance. But he that errs against the Church hath willfully, because without apparent reason left his guide, and means appointed ; or in case the reason of his dissent seem'd to him apparent, yet it had not seem'd so, had he honestly used the means for his better Information ; for God is never wanting

to such ; but when Men have itching Ears, run after Novelties, and have no love to the Truth, *2 Thef. 2. 10.* then *v. 11.* *For this cause God sends 'em strong Delusions, that they might believe a Lye.* Therefore all their subsequent Errors are the issue and Offspring of that causeless, and willful separation ; which kind of Sins are not forgiven, but upon a special repentance.


This is a rule so plain and safe ; that certainly it had never been oppos'd, had not some out of politick ends, and others out of a weak and superstitious fear of Popery run into all the extreams from it ; unless where interest and secular advantages may teach an Union : For Knavery in some, and weakness in others, hath gave being to all the parts of Phanaticism : The Romanists shew Reverence in Churches, therefore these in opposition will have all places alike : For fear of being lavish in their Devotions, they become prophane and slovenly ; and out of a dread of Idols, in some real, in others pretended, run into Sacriledg ; and in the case before us, *they* are said to believe as the Church believes, without requiring any farther grounds and motives of Credibility ; therefore *these* will believe her in nothing, but contradict and oppose her in all they can ; and rather than they will be thought to follow the Church in any thing, they give up themselves with as real an implicite faith to some Illiterate and Mechanick guide, as any are thought to do to the Church of *Rome* : Which necessarily runs 'em into more Errors, and greater Confusions, than they think by such methods to avoid : For from hence have sprung our *Quakers, Seekers, Ranters, Adamites, Fanaticalists, Muggletonians, fifth Monarchists*, withal the herds of Sectaries, that have debauched Religion beyond that of Heathen *Rome*, or *Turkey*. Therefore to avoid all damnable Heresies and Schisms ; and the roving extravagancies of Enthusiastick heads, we have no

more certain and ready way, than to follow the Church, where we have no plain Scripture to the contrary.

And indeed it is very observable, that all pretenders to Christianity do hold the necessity of some guide and rule in matters of Religion, whereby they may come to aright understanding of Scripture; and thence to assent and union in every Truth. Those that are for no Government, nor any Humane measures, but for an absolute Liberty, as they are Christians, do boast of an extraordinary *Light, and Conduct of the Spirit*; which they make to be their guide, that leads 'em into all Truth. But the monstrous Errors, beastly Practices, and direct Contradictions these people run into, do abundantly convince all observing Men, that they have not that Conduct, which by pretending to such a guide, they own necessary for Christians. Then those who are for some Face of a Church and Government, do likewise grant the necessity of some helps this way. Therefore *Calvin* will have every one go *ad proprium pastorem*, to his own Doctor, or Teacher: Now this Pastor must be taken either *Independently*, or *Dependently*; if the former, then he attributes that to Individuals, which we ascribe to many: And would have Men give up themselves to the guidance of one, when we would have him follow the Church of God; therefore he is a thousand times more likely to be led into Error that way, than this. But take him dependently, as speaking not from his own private Light, but according to the Doctrine, and Judgment of the Church, of which he is a part, and this is no more than what we are pleading for; unless in name only, he meaning an *Assembly of Presbyters*, we a *Synod of Divines*. Therefore since it is agreed on all hands, that there must be something to guide us to a right understanding of Divine things, and

and keep us within the due bounds of reason, and Duty; and secure us from those sly impostures, which debauch the plainest Scriptures, and most reasonable Duties; let us not follow that, which sad observation tells us, hath ever proved the Mother of Confusion; but that which the Scripture directs us to, *viz. the customs and usages of the Church*: And then there is some hope we may once come *to be joyned together in the same mind, and the same judgment*, and as Brethren to dwell in *Unity*.

2. There is an *Unity of Affections*: When Men live in mutual-Love, and good will. This is an indispensable Duty, which is never superseded by any difference of Judgment; for if we cannot agree in every point, yet however this should be no breach of our Love. Unity of Affections should always hold, though Unity of Judgment may not.

For we are commanded to love without consideration of Mens particular Opinions. Those precepts make no exception of Persons, but reach to all Men, and therefore to those that differ from us. *S. John 1 Ep. 4. 7.* bids us *to love one another*, and that for this reason, *viz. that God is love; and every one that loves is born of God*. Nothing speaks us so much his Children, as a Participation of Divine Qualifications; but then our love must be like his, who makes the *Sun to shine on the Evil, and the Good*: Else we can never be his Children, *Mat. 5. 44, 45.* His Love and Mercy, which is over all his Works, are the rule our Affections must walk by. 

It was the old Pharisaical Doctrine our Saviour condemns, *Thou shalt Love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy*. To confine our Affections, and good Offices, to our Friends, and them of our own party, is no more than the Scribes and Pharisees have ever done; and Jews and Turks at this day do. But Christian charity is  
more:

more extensive, and reaches even the poor Samaritan.

Now this was ever the Practice, as well as Duty of the true Church; her very Censures are for *Edification*, not for *Destruction*; all her Acts were lively instances of her Affections. But all the contraries of Love have constantly been the black Brand of false pretenders. For when difference of Opinion draws Men off from the Church, they soon lose their Affections. When *Donatus* divides, he confines the Church to *Africa*: And every Heretick restrained her to the narrow bounds of his own Fraternity. We have seen there are no such unnatural heats, Unchristian Oppositions, and Uncharitable Censures, as of one party against another, and of the whole against the Church.

Nor is this an accidental, but a necessary consequence from the other, being so generally consequent thereupon, that you find no exceptions from this rule; if of persons, yet not of parties. For Envy, and Opposition, is of the very nature of Division: Gathered Churches naturally teach Men to confine their Love to their own parties; and live at a distance from all others, as Persons that are without. Every one is willing to believe himself in the right, and to justify his own separation; which he cannot do without speaking others in the wrong. It is true, he is not always the Schismatick that separates, but he that gives the occasion: Therefore Separatists, to throw the odious Imputation of Schism from themselves, always endeavour to prove the cause to be in the Church: To which end they *blacken*, and bespatter her all they can, as guilty of *Worship*, *Superstition*, *Idolatry*, *Lukewarmness*, or any other vile and filthy Imputation. Whence they distinguish themselves from her by certain Novel names. The *Turks* in their way delight in nothing so much as

to be called *Musulmans*, right Believers, in opposition to the *Persians*, who agree with 'em in the same imposture; but differ about the Interpreters of *Ma-homet*.

There were an ancient Sect of Hereticks that called themselves the *Gnosticks*, that is, knowing Men, as the Etymology of the word imports; which implied the Church were a company of poor Fools, that were still in the Dark. After them others stiled themselves the *Wise*, the pure, exclusive of all others: To which the word *Puritan* afterwards succeeded. And indeed this is implied in the very reason of Schism; for every Sect thinks it self purer than the Church it divides from, otherwise it had never divided at all: And from the same Root spring those Pharisaical Appellations now in use, viz. the *good People*, the *sober Party*, the *People of the Lord*, and the *true Protestants*, as if none were such, but their own selves. Whence *S. Paul* 1 *Cor.* 3. 3. As a Polititian, as well as Divine, puts *Envy*, *Strife*, and *Division* all together; as Sins Dependent, and Productive one of another. And *St. James* ch. 3. 14. tells the Jewish Converts, who differed from the Gentile Christians about Mosaic Rites, and Ceremonies; that they had *μεγίστην ζήλον, καὶ ἰσθμὴν*, a *bitter Zeal*; or as our Translation renders it, *bitter Envy*, and *Strife in their Hearts*. When the ten Tribes once set up their *Calves* at *Dan*, and *Bethel*; they never after lived friendly with *Judah*: Nor had the *Samaritans* any sooner built their Temple on mount *Gerizim*, but they quickly refused all Commerce, and Society with the Jews; and denied entertainment to our Saviour, though for no other reason, but because he set *his Face as though he would go to Jerusalem*. Such are the black and ugly Offspring of difference of Judgment, when it runs Men into parties: That we must endeavour to be of *one Judgment*,



ment, as the best expedient to a being *like-minded* one towards another.

3. There is an *Unity of Peace*: When Men live securely together, without being alarm'd by Ryots and Tumults; when they are not branded for *Men worthy*, nor closely design'd to a common Slaughter. This flows necessarily from the other, and is imply'd and wrapt up in it, as the conclusion in its premises. For if we must love, then we may not injure and destroy; difference of Judgment should not prove breaches of our Peace; nor controversies about Religion kindle the Flames of an Irreligious War.

This is a Truth founded in Nature, as well as Revelation: A Primitive State of War is as much a Monster, as the *Leviathan* that taught it. For all Men were apprehensive of this Truth: The Poet makes that a Degenerate, and Iron Age, such as was not from the beginning, wherein there was not

*hospes ab hospite tutus.*

One Friend and Neighbour safe by another.

The Prophets foretold that the Gospel Dispensation should bring *Unity, Peace*, and everlasting *Righteousness* into the World: That then Weapons of Death should be turn'd to Implements of Husbandry; and Men *should learn War no more*: That the *Lion should lie down with the Lamb*; and the *Leopard eat Straw like the Ox*: That all evil Qualities should be transformed into better tempers; and that nothing should hurt or destroy in all his *Holy Mountain*.

*Jam redit & Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna:*

Now Justice, and the Golden Ages of the World, return again.

The Gospel it self was prefaced with, *On Earth Peace, good will towards Men*. It designs not only the Reconciling us to God, but the Uniting us one to another.

It



It teaches Subjects to *obey every Ordinance of Man;* to study to be quiet, and to do every one his own business. It teaches not to revenge our selves, but to suffer in smaller matters, rather than make a noise and disturbance in our just Vindications, *Mat. 5. 39. 40. 41.* It declares that those who live in *Strife and Division, are Carnal, and walk as Men:* 1 *Ep. Cor. 3. 3.* And therefore such that have made but little, if any advances in True Religion. In *Rom. 13. 13.* we have *Ryoting, and Drunkenness; Chambering, and Wantonness; Strife, and Envy;* put all together as very fit Companions; whence the Exhortation is *iniquitatem detrahentes, let us walk honestly as in the day;* implying that the practice of such things is a walking dishonestly, and is suited to none, but times of Darknes; Intemperance and Incontinence are made the *Lusts of the Flesh*, which make Men like Beasts; but Pride, Sedition, and Rebellion are the *filthiness of the Spirit*, which make 'em like Devils.

Whence some have made it a question and scruple of conscience, Whether Arms be at all Lawful for Christians? And it hath been by many determin'd that none are but *defensive only*: That is, not of Subjects against Lawful Governours, but of one Society, or Nation, when invaded against another. Therefore those are new as well as false Lights, Monstrous Saints, Club Divines, and Bloody Casuists, that study and advise the perplexing all Humane affairs; and the making a Society mad: The overturning Crowns and Miters; and the imbroyling a Nation in Massacres and Blood.

Having thus viewed our Subject, we pass

Secondly, To the Duty we owe it, and that is

————— *to dwell together in it.*

Which Phrase speaks it the business, and constant Companion of our Lives. For we must

————— *dwell in Unity.*

To which end, the Text presses it with many apt and cogent Arguments : As

I. From our common Relation ; we are *Brethren*, and therefore should live in Unity.

———— *Brethren to dwell together in Unity.*

We are descended from the same common Parents, agree in the same common Nature ; we are all parts of the same Society, or Body Politick, and therefore *Members one of another*. From which Topick the Scripture often draws Arguments to this purpose, as *Acts 7. 26.* *Sirs, ye are Brethren, why do ye wrang one to another ?* Implying that no reason can be given, why they should not agree that stand thus related.

We have all but one Baptism, but one Faith, but one Hope, and but one God : We are all parts of the same Spiritual Building, and make up the Body of Christ, which is the Church : We all live in hope and expectation of that common Inheritance ; as we are *Heirs of God, and Joynt Heirs with Christ*. Whence not only the Scripture, but the first Christians called one another *Brother* and *Sister*. Therefore our Relation, as well as common Faith, should oblige us to this Unity. These were the things that made the Primitive Professors hold together, as one intire Body, distinct from the rest of the World. Whence the Gentiles would often say, as *Tertul.* relates, *See how these Christians love one another !*

Now our Religion is the same, its Rules and Precepts are noway altered : Our Relation, Dependance, and all other reasons of Unity are the same too : Therefore the Duty is as great, and the Obligations as strong as ever. And consequently that we do not love and unite as much as they ; is from the sole reason of Mens departure from the *Holy Commands delivered to 'em*. Our breaches proceed from alterations, not in our Religion, but in the minds.

minds of Men. Our rule is still the same, but we do not keep so well up to it: Men have not more Light and Liberty now; but stronger Passions, and more stubborn Lusts, that debauch 'em into parties, and Seditions. Where they have learned to reckon none Brethren but such who like *Simeon and Levi* are *Brethren in Iniquity*, who linked in the same *Association* are in *their Anger for killing Men, and in their selfwill for digging down our Wall*, viz. of Strength and Government: While others, poor Souls, are the wicked of the Earth, who have forfeited all into the hands of the Saints, and are fit for nothing but to be *taken and destroyed*: Or, as the Association words it, to be *pursued to Destruction*. Therefore seeing *Hell* hath taught Men, not only to enervate this Argument of Heaven; but to turn it to the ends of Destruction, instead of Edification, I shall inquire what strength there is in the next Argument, and that is,

Secondly, The advantages of doing so; *it is good.*

——— *Behold how good it is: Brethren to dwell together in Unity.*

For it is agreeable to our reasons, and desirable from its own native worth, and Beauty: And therefore exacts Praises from every Tongue, even from them, whose private interests and humours lead 'em to destroy it. Nor is it an unprofitable good, like some mere Ornaments of the Universe, which serve only to please the Eye, and delight the Mind; and give a pleasant Theme for the Orator, and Historian to play upon. Nor is it like the pure Positives under the Law, which had no intrinsic or relative good in 'em, but stood purely Instances of obedience: For Unity brings Profit wherever it comes, and derives a sweet Prosperity to all publick and private affairs of Men. It gives a free Commerce and Communication of every good thing from one part

of a Society to another. Like a due Circulation of the Blood, it maintains every Member in health, and Vigor ; and inables 'em to perform their distinct and proper Offices. Whence a very sensible increase must necessarily arise to the whole : Which made the Ancients to observe, that by *Concord* small and inconsiderable things soon wax great, and make a figure in the World. For which cause the Founders of Cities and Nations have endeavoured to contrive such Laws that might satisfy the minds, and give security to the Persons, and properties of Men ; whence a lasting Unity might arise as the surest Foundation of outward greatness.

Unity seldom wears the Willow Garland, but is generally Crowned with Blessings and Success ; as our own Histories and Observation may evince : For Nations and Churches when wasted by War and Persecutions have ever found this, like the Vernal Sun, that gives new Life and Vigor to the World ; and makes 'em like the Hills of *Sion*, to laugh and sing.

Whereas Variance and Divisions, like boding Owls and Ravens, have ever proved unlucky both to Church and State.

For Controversies about Religion have many times almost destroyed Religion itself : When that zeal which should have been employ'd in the duties owing to God and Man, hath wasted itself in disputes, and bitter invectives. Whence such times have usually heightened mens Passions, but not their Graces ; and made many Combatants, but few Christians. Till in fine, Religion torn into numerous Fractions, hath, like the Echo, pinned into little but a voice ; and mens Christianity been concluded from their being on this, or the other side. And whereas it is observed, that Divine Judgments have usually fallen upon the Church, when Division hath made her mad ; we must consider this not solely as an exertion

exertion of Divine Power and Justice, but also as the Natural effect of this Sin : For God usually punishes Sin with those Sufferings which are the Natural results and necessary consequences of 'em : He cloaths the Sluggard in Rags, brings the Prodigal to a Morsel of Bread ; and fills those with Confusions, and every evil work, that delight in breaking the Churches Order and Peace. Therefore where we see a Divided, we must expect an Afflicted people ; not only because God hath declared his wrath from Heaven against such things, but likewise by reason the same Divisions have a Natural tendency to divers kinds of mischief.

Nor hath Division a less malignant influence on the State ; for it hath brought desolation into almost every corner of the World, as may be proved by an induction of particulars from almost all parts of it anciently known. It not only checks Trade in the general, but withdraws it from many particulars ; and several other ways oppresses and injures 'em ; which must be a considerable weakning to the whole : It sometimes necessitates Governours to act above and beyond Law, for the preservation of themselves and Government ; and oftentimes hath given up the whole into Foreign hands. Whence it was a Maxim, or conclusion from reason, laid down by Antient Politicians, *Divide and Conquer*. The *Malmsbury* Philosophy, which presumes a state of War to have been the Primitive condition of Mankind, doth yet plead that mutual preservation was the Origin of all Societies ; which is a plain concession that *Union* is the best means of mutual preservation ; and consequently Division which runs men first into Parties, and then into Opposition, is the ready way to ruin. Our Saviour tells us, that *an House, a City, or a Kingdom divided against itself, cannot stand, but is brought to desolation* : Now he lays down this as a Medium to

prove something farther, *viz.* that a Division in the Kingdom of Darkness will destroy that Kingdom; and because the thing that proves must be the *notius*, or better known than that which is proved; therefore that such Division will destroy Kingdoms and Societies of Men, must be very well known and easily granted even in those Ages of the World: Else we must suppose him to be proving *ignotum per ignotum*, which nothing but weakness or fallacy can offer. It is therefore the maddest thing in the World for Men to dream of keeping off a ruine by the aptest means and methods to let it in. To secure their *Persons, Properties* and *Religion*, by those very courses which all Histories and Observation tell us, have been Destructive to 'em all! Which is no less mad than to break down our Banks, to the end we may keep out the Sea: Or to take Poyson for recovery of our Health.

And certainly our Circumstances make the madness and wonder greater than ever: Because

1. The parties divided from, and against the Church, are so many, so irreconcilable, and so hot one against another; that if we may suppose they had the Government again in their own hands; they could not live comparably so happy as under present Establishments. For they must then either fall under some one party, or live as they can in a Medly together: If the former, they cannot but know they must expect severer *Misadministrations* than from the present Government: If the latter, they must live in continual Feuds, and contests, every one for his own way; and because nothing is established, and they know not what may, they must consequentially stand in continual uncertainties, both as to Property and Religion; which must necessarily make 'em as restless as under late Usurpations; when the Nation was vexed and harrass'd; oppress'd and con-

founded



founded beyond the example of all Ages. Which made some who were the first beginners of our Calamities, to wheel about for a Royal Interest, only as the lesser Evil. And because

2. Popery (as they daily tell us) is closely watching an opportunity of obtaining amongst us: Which in all Humane reason it can never do, could we stand United together. But by Division they make a Gap and Lane for its easy Advance. For those that have seen, or have otherwise any deep impressions from the Miseries of the late Rebellion, that nauseate the damn'd Hypocrisies Violence and Blood of those days; finding *Divisions* ready to repeat the same Miseries; that *Hanibal* was ready again to enter our Gates; and that the *Stirs*, as the *L. R.* in his last Papers diminutively calls 'em, were just ready to devour us; they will set themselves intirely to the opposing this Evil; what little regards soever they may have to the other. Nor can we in reason expect but that Men will the most oppose that, which is the nearest Evil, hath the most hands and means to promote it; and which, like an *Hurricane* blown up from Hell, hath destroyed not *Job's* House and Children only; but born down even all before it. There is therefore no such Enemy, both to Religion and Government as Dividers are. A Truth so plain; that was it not, that the Devil owes Men a shame; or that God is pleas'd to punish 'em by their own inventions: making their Choice to become their Ruine; we cannot imagine any Man should be so blind as not to see, at least in this their day,

———— How good it is for *Brethren* to dwell together in Unity.

3. It is farther pressed from the Comforts and Satisfaction that arise from such a Life: For it is joyful.

Behold,



—— Behold how good and joyful a thing it is to dwell in Unity.

When Balaam Numb. 24. 2. saw *Israel* abiding in his Tents, according to their tribes, so great a Body, and yet in such admirable Unity and Order, he breaks forth into a kind of rapture, v. 5. *How goodly are thy Tents, O Jacob, and thy Tabernacles O Israel?* Whence he proceeds to the highest description of their future Greatness and Glory, v. 8, 9. *He shall eat up the Nations, &c.* as if that sight had moved him beyond his former capacities. It is certain indeed that the Prophets spoke as they were moved of God: Yet it was usually by the advantages of some external Object, either real or visionary: Thus we read of *Daniel's* four Beasts, representing the four chief Empires of the World. *Ezekiel's* Roll, and his boiling Pot, &c. all representing the matter they had to speak. So when Balaam saw *Israel* in his Tents, in Unity and Order, which was it self a rational Prediction, or promising sign of their future Greatness; it follows in the next words, the *Spirit of the Lord* came upon him, and he took up his parable and said — *he shall eat up the Nations, &c.* — But Ryots, Tumults, and unreasonable Hurries would have been an ill rise for the Prophet to have taken up his parable from. Had he seen that vast Body crumbled into little parties, agreeing in nothing but Oppositions; had he seen them with Clubs and Staves assaulting the Tents of their Prince, and the Priest. And scrambling the Names of *Corah, Dathan, Abiram, Absalom, Achitophel, &c.* our Seditious Bonfires; a sight so ugly, and the probable issues so fatal; we may expect that either he would have sung us another Song, or that the *As* might once again have open'd his Mouth and have reprov'd the madness of the Prophet.

What more unmanly than that *Asian* Ryot, *Acts* 23. 32.  
Where

Where the whole City was moved, but few could tell what any would have ? Or that in *Acts* 23. 10. where *S. Paul* was like to have been torn in pieces by contending parties ? What more unseemly, and nauseous a sight, than the Mobile in *Acts* 22. 22, 23. *casting off their Coats, and throwing dust in the Air, and crying against S. Paul, away with such a Fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live ?* Such meetings are like herds of wild Beasts, all noise, but no order : Passion enough, but no reason, where every one is ready to use his Paw as well as his Tongue. Such Assemblies make Halls and Cities like *Bedlam*, where all differ in noise and actions ; and agree in nothing but this, that they all are mad. These sights make ugly impressions on all sober minds, and leave nothing but nauseousness and aversion behind them.

While Unity hath beauty and comeliness in it ; and affords a delight, and complacency to every Eye. The World hath not an Object more satisfactory and pleasant than a body of Men without noise and clamor, acting Uniformly in their places and driving up in a regular course to their several ends. This is a spectacle so worthy of Men, that *S. Paul* tells his *Colossians* ch. 2. 5. *That he rejoiced, beholding their Order.*

Nor is it more pleasant in the Object, than joyful in the effects, and consequences : For while passionate heats and giddy motions, run Men beyond Reason and Law ; make their Houses too hot, and their Countries too narrow for 'em ; and perhaps bring 'em by weeping crosses to their long homes : Unity and orderly Methods keep 'em Masters of their Passions, secure 'em from Scaffolds and Gibbets ; and inable 'em to sit under their Vines and Fig-trees, where none can make 'em afraid. While designing Heads fill'd with Cares and Fears ; the constant Companions of unlawful Policies ; vexed with Delays and Disappointments ; hag'd by a Guilty Con-

science and night-mared with the Gripping Jealousies of Bloody Fates and Vengeance; lose the sweetness of all past, and present Comforts. Those that live in Unity as they are Men and Christians, fear no evil because they design and do none; and have leisure not only to gust and relish every Mercy; but also to collect all the scatter'd Blessings of their Lives into one Body, and at every view repeat the pleasure they perceiv'd from their first Injoyment.

Such void of fear, and secure from dangers, reflect upon their Lives past, and joyfully see 'em sully'd with no Strife and Contention; no Schisms and Seditions; but so conform'd to their Lord and Master, that no provocations, distracted times, and common delusions have been able to draw 'em to Factious Clubs and Seditious Meetings; or at any time to have their Voice heard in the Streets; in any *common Rout designing Shows or Bon-fires.*

Lives so suited to the Nature, and Intendments of the Gospel, as well as to that, the Saints do lead in Heaven, that the Pleasure and Satisfaction arising from such Contemplations, inable the Man to say of Unity, as *Solomon of Wisdom*, viz. that *her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her paths are Peace: Length of days are in her right Hand; and in her left Riches and Honours.* Whence it is no wonder that in the

Fourth place we have a *behold* fixt upon it,

——— *Behold it is good.*

Which points out this Unity as a subject worthy our Consideration and Practice. For this word is seldom used but in these two cases, viz. where the matter is either strong, and somewhat surprising; or else of more than ordinary importance, as it is in this place, therefore its business is to turn our thoughts to so noble and worthy a Subject.

*Behold*

*Behold it is good,*

Which Fifthly, Is farther recommended by the manner of its proposal in that particule *How*;

*Behold how good and joyful a thing it is.*

Such indefinite ways of expression hint the happiness of the thing to be so incomparable, that we can receive due and adequate thoughts of it from nothing else but our own experience; therefore he doth not say, but bids us taste and see *how good and joyful it is to live in Unity*: For who would expect any thing farther, where the Author seems swallow'd up in the Contemplation of so excellent a Life? And at a loss how to express his large and sublime Conceptions of it! But at length he recovers himself, and tells v. 2. that *it is like the precious Ointment upon the Head, that ran down upon the Beard: Even to Aarons Beard, and went down to the Skirts of his Cloathing. A precious Ointment*; such as was made by Divine appointment, such as was sweet as Incense, and such as was made Holy by God himself, in that it was appropriate to such a peculiar use. Even such is Unity, *so Precious, so Sweet, so Holy* and therefore *so acceptable* in the sight of God! Then v. 3, 4. *Like as the Dew of Hermon: Which fell upon the Hill of Sion. For there the Lord promised his Blessing: And Life for evermore.*

Now pleasure and profit are the grand ends and motives of all Humane Actions; without which all labours and diligence would quickly cease, and so powerful attractives are these; that we can pursue the little particles of either, through more than the common hazards of Humane Life. Therefore it must needs stand a reproach to them for ever; whom both together, and in such excelling degrees too, cannot oblige to this Unity, which as the Gentiles said of Virtue, is a reward to it self. A Life which every wise and

considerate Man would choose, had it no other recompence, but the present advantages and satisfactions that arise from it.

But because many will commend Unity, and own it a necessary Duty for all Christians to agree together; but plead the fault of Division is not in them, but in the Government, which requires their Union upon those terms they cannot close with: I will therefore inquire.

1. What is the sense of their chief Authors and Leaders in this particular; and

2. Whether we may in charity judge their Division from us to proceed really from any scruple of Conscience.

1. Mr. *Vines* who was an hot Man in the late Rebellion, and at the Treaty at *Uxbridge against the King*, by which you must judge him no Church-man, in his Sermons upon the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, Printed after his Death, undertakes to prove that nothing can justify a Separation from a True Church, less than flat Idolatry: And gives a challenge to any Man to give an instance in Scripture to the contrary: For all Separation is either Local, or Moral; now a Local Separation is required from Idolatrous Temples, and Heathen Mixtures, as in *2 Cor. 6. 16. What Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols?* For you Christians are his Temples both by Dedication in Baptism: and also by the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit dwelling in you: Therefore *v. 17. Come out from amongst 'em, and be ye separate*: But we have neither Precept, nor example of any allowed separation from a Christian Church, unless a Moral only. He argues from the Church of *Thyatira*, *Revel. 2.* Which suffered the false Prophets to seduce his People to commit Fornication, and to eat things Sacrificed to Idols; which were great Corruptions,

ruptions, but yet v. 24, 25. *Upon you that are pure, viz. from these things, I put no other burthen but this, that which you have already, hold fast till I come.* Here is not a word of separation locally, viz. the leaving their Assemblies, but morally only, viz. from her Sins.

If you consult Mr. Jenkins on Jude v. 19. *separating themselves*, where he tells you what a Church you may, and what an one you may not separate from; there is nothing that can justify, but rather condemn his present separation. Mr. Baxter published a piece *An. Dom.* 1670. Intituled the *Cure of Church-Division, or Directions for weak Christians to keep them from being Dividers or Troublers of the Church.* Dr. Bryan in his Sermons Printed *An. Dom.* 70. and pag. 328. presses all parties to live free from any appearance of Contention, either in Church or State: They that do so having the Brand of *Graceless Men set upon 'em by the Holy Ghost.* Jud. 8, 11, 12. In the next page every Man that dwells in God, is of a Peaceable disposition: *Quiet in the Land.* Psal. 35. 20. The Ancient Puritans were all for a Lay-Communion; and smartly opposed the Brownists, now Independents, for the desperate breaches they made in the Church: And even Brightman himself, that extravagant Expofitor, on Revel. 3. 20. *Behold, I stand at the Door and knock* — faith that those who are asham'd to sit down in that Church, where Christ is not asham'd to knock by his Word and Ordinances, do make themselves *purer than Christ himself.* We have a Cloud of Witnesses to this point in a late piece for *Lay-Communion*; therefore I shall only give you part of an Epistle to a Book Intituled the *Saints Care of Church Communion.* Printed *An. Dom.* 1671. By Mr. Crofton a late Nonconformist.

' *Nonconformists of old did account it their glory, that they did not separate, nor any way encourage or countenance,*



'tenance, but every way disown and oppose the Separatist.  
 'The Judicious Ball affirms, That as Hannibal ob-  
 'served there was not one in the Enemies Camp called Gisco:  
 'so there was not so much as one of the godly Ministers which  
 'suffered in England about the Discipline, that might be  
 'deservedly called Brownist; not a Nonconformist could be  
 'found a Separatist; I wish we could at this day say the  
 'same thing, with the same truth and confidence. But  
 'alas! How many whose Preaching and Writings have  
 'been strong and fervent against Separation, do at this  
 'day make the Independents insult, Tour Presbyters  
 'leave the publick Assemblies, have gathered Churches, in  
 'which they minister the whole solemn Worship of God; and  
 'not contented with Domestick Liberty, have occasioned  
 'the Laws, and execution thereof, to confound them,  
 'with the severest Separatists, and most vile Sects, that  
 'ever troubled the Churches Order, or the Nations Peace?  
 'Pudeat hæc dici potuisse, & non potuisse refelli. I did in  
 'an Epistle published many years since, sollicite the  
 'serious Nonconformists, in this day of temptation, to  
 'kick off that Bastard-Brood of Separatists which hang on  
 'them, and are by their Enemies laid at their door, as  
 'their genuine off-spring. But I have not herein prevailed;  
 'but, to the anguish of my Soul, seen Schism so acceptable  
 'to good men, that scarce any called Nonconformist dare  
 'once reprove it. In sense whereof, and in conscience  
 'of duty, I could not keep silence, but by Pulpit and  
 'Press stand up to testify against this common growing  
 'evil, eating out Love, the Heart of Piety, the Power  
 'of Truth, and Unity of the Church.

'I expect the Committee of Discretion (at whose Barr  
 'I have (on this very cause) stood more than twenty  
 'years without conviction) to revive against Me, and  
 'this Work, their old Charge; however the thing is good,  
 'the Doctrine is truth, the discovery thereof be duty; yet  
 'it



' *it is done unseasonably, and out of time.* I have been  
 ' often arraigned for *missing the season*; yet no man hath  
 ' set me a *Dial* by which to determine the time of my  
 ' Ministerial actings: In the year 1655, my *Saints Zeal*  
 ' *against sinful Altars*, was out of season: In 1661, my  
 ' *Reformation not Separation*, was out of season. It is now  
 ' 1670, and yet the *season* of this duty is not seen.  
 ' When will this *season* be, wherein I may appear against  
 ' Schism? When I am in the Grave (towards which I  
 ' hasten) where there is no mention of God, nor plead-  
 ' ing the cause of his Church? If I know any thing of  
 ' the Mind of the *God of Time*, and may compare Watches  
 ' with the faithful Watch-men of God's House, the *season*  
 ' of Ministerial reproof, is the *season* of *sin's* prevalency:  
 ' When the Believers are in danger to be *beguiled from*  
 ' *the simplicity of the Gospel*, was Paul's *season* to cry out,  
 ' *Take heed of Angels of light, and false Apostles.* When  
 ' *Schisms in the Church* (not so dangerous and deadly as  
 ' Schisms from the Church) *distracted Corinth*, was the  
 ' Apostles time to cry out, *Ye are carnal, ye are not spi-*  
 ' *ritual.* When Peter turned Separatist, and drew Bar-  
 ' nabas into the Schism, was Paul's *season* to withstand  
 ' him to the face, *because he was to be blamed.* What shall  
 ' I say of the Prophets, who timed their Prophecies by  
 ' the prevalency of Israel's defection: And our Saviour,  
 ' who chose the *season* to explain the Law, when the  
 ' Scribes and Pharisees had made the word of God of none  
 ' effect by their Traditions. Austin's *season* to preach a-  
 ' gainst Drunkenness, was when, and as long as the men  
 ' of Hippo lived Drunkards. And to appear against Sepa-  
 ' ration, when, and as long as the Donatists Schism pre-  
 ' vailed in the Christian World. Luther's *season* to ex-  
 ' press his zeal against the German Anabaptists, and Li-  
 ' bertines, was when they exposed his Reformation to  
 ' reproach. Ball, Hilderham, Hind, Nicols, and other  
 ' Non-

‘ Nonconformist’s *season*, to speak and write against *Se-  
paration*, was when the Brownist’s *Non-communion* be-  
‘ came the reproach of their *Non-conformity*. If these  
‘ may not guide me, lend me your *Watches*; if they go  
‘ not false, I will set mine by them.

‘ In answer to this charge of missing the season of  
‘ Truth and Duty, I have many years since appealed to  
‘ Presbyters, Whether men *wisely serving God’s Provi-  
‘ dence, and studious to do God and his Church proper and  
‘ apt service, must not judg the time of witnessing corruptions  
‘ circa cultum publicum, will not warrant Non-communion  
‘ and Separation from a true Church, to be; then, when,  
‘ that is acted on this ground and reason? Till that be  
‘ argued and over-ru’d, I will plead no more to this In-  
‘ ditement; and that I expect not to be, till Christ do  
‘ come to Judgment.*

‘ Secondly: But you will be ready to complain, That  
‘ I am *too rigid, too severe and bitter against the Indepen-  
‘ dent Congregationalist’s, who undoubtedly are very good  
‘ men.* To this I say:

‘ 1. The Goodness of the men be to *themselves*: But  
‘ remember, The *Goodness of the men* is the common  
‘ bait which hideth the *Hook of Imposture and Seduction,*  
‘ by which the simple are beguiled. *Angels of Light,*  
‘ *Men like the Apostles of Christ, Pious Pelagius, Devout  
‘ and Holy Novatius, have been the perverters of Truth,  
‘ and subverters of the Churches Peace and Order.* And be  
‘ the men never so good, the severe reproof of their *vile  
‘ Opinions, and sinful Practices, must not be superseded  
‘ by that Goodness which is in them.*

‘ 2. Be the men as good as they will, if by their fruits  
‘ we may know them, we must be free to affirm, they  
‘ have been *no good Plants in the Lord’s Garden.* To pass  
‘ by the Narrative of their Practices beyond the Seas,  
‘ collected by the *Anti-apologist,* and improved by

‘ Mr.

' Mr. Robert Baylie, beyond the possibility of denial or  
 ' contradiction. Should we but declare their *Paganizing*  
 ' all England, the Confusions in Church, and *Commutations*  
 ' in Commonwealth, which our Eyes have seen acted by,  
 ' and this present Age must attest to have been the un-  
 ' happy horrid Generation-work of these good men; you must  
 ' needs say, The severest rebuke of them must needs be  
 ' too gentle. But I will forbear to recite the Acts which  
 ' all of this Age must needs remember: Yet when I con-  
 ' sider the *sinfulness* of Schism, the *speciality* of their  
 ' Schism, exceeding that of the rigid Brownists; un-  
 ' churching not only England, but all the Reformed  
 ' Churches, at one blow; meritoriously, by their Apostacy;  
 ' and legally, by the Law of their rejection: And remem-  
 ' ber their precipitancy, if I must not say perfidy, in fall-  
 ' ing into it when the pretended occasions of stumbling were  
 ' out of their way, and they were solemnly engaged against  
 ' Schism, and this very Schism: I cannot but see much  
 ' reason to maintain a constant and severe zeal against  
 ' them; and the rather, for that (we have observed it,  
 ' we know the verity of it) the sobriety, moderation,  
 ' and indulgent silence, of their soft and over-mild Bre-  
 ' thren, hath been the nourishment, guard, and advantage  
 ' of their Schism: They, as (their Progenitors) the  
 ' Donatists, did at first study nothing more, than by the  
 ' cry of Moderation, Moderation towards Brethren and  
 ' Good men, to charm the Zeal and Duty of those who  
 ' ought to have discovered this Panther's Face, before  
 ' they had broken in, and made havock of the Church of  
 ' God, as at this day they do, necessitating more loud  
 ' cries, and severe reproofs against them, than ever; for  
 ' that they have prevailed so far, as to seduce Multitudes,  
 ' and confound endeavours for Reformation, with their  
 ' groundless Separation; and, with the Donatists, want  
 ' nothing but opportunity to make their Schism continueer

through the World, beyond the power of Magistratical  
cohibition.

The simple Godly have a long time been deluded  
with a pretence, *That there is no great difference between  
them and their angry Brethren ; it is but a matter of  
Discipline, there is nothing in their Practice fundamentally  
erroneous, or inconsistent with salvation.* And scarce  
any man is found so faithful, as to detect the falsehood  
of this Plea : Let me tell you wherein the Contro-  
versie only concerneth *matters of Discipline* : I have  
often said it, and now say it aloud ; Though I know  
the *Discipline* they pretend to, to be *confused, disorderly,  
and mischievous to the Church* ; neither found in Scrip-  
ture, nor right Reason or Polity ; yet let them own  
the *being and truth of the Church, the salvability of Mi-  
nistration in it ; and in union with the Church, in any  
particular, orderly distributed Assembly, make their  
Discipline practicable if they can ; they shall not be by  
me disturbed, till they have experienced the evill there-  
of in its Effects.* But be ye not deceived ; there is  
more cause of controversie, than matters of Discipline  
only. I have often under my hand asserted, what with  
the leave of my more moderate Brethren I will persist  
in, and undertake to demonstrate, to the conviction of  
them who deny it, at least to the undeceiving of the  
weak, who are seduced by them : That if

1. *Groundless or causeless Separation from true Churches ;*
2. *Self-constitution of new Churches ;*
3. *Self-consecration of a new Ministry ;*

be, as none can deny they be, *fundamental errors, and  
Practices inconsistent with a state of salvation ; then the*

‘ *Way or Practice of the Independent-Congregationalist<sup>s</sup>*  
 ‘ *among us, is fundamentally erroneous, and inconsistent*  
 ‘ *with Salvation*: For, that they have groundlessly *sepa-*  
 ‘ *rated from true Churches, constituted new Churches, and*  
 ‘ *consecrated a new Ministry*; inasmuch that they who  
 ‘ were lawfully ordained, have renounced their Ordi-  
 ‘ nation, and received their Ministry in their new Way;  
 ‘ let any who have seen their course, and considered their  
 ‘ Writings, deny if they can.

‘ Although I have charity to believe, many a *sincere*  
 ‘ *heart towards God, may simply communicate with Gods*  
 ‘ *Ordinances among them, and not be sensible of their*  
 ‘ *Schism, nor design so great an evil, no way obvious to*  
 ‘ *the weak*; yet their Way being in it self *so evil*, re-  
 ‘ quireth all that will be found faithful ( as *Jerome and*  
 ‘ *Austin against the Donatists* ) to animate each other  
 ‘ to *discover so great an evil, and withstand so grievous*  
 ‘ *Schism, growing to so great an height, as to confound,*  
 ‘ *yea nullifie the Church of God among us.*

Bravely offered: What to prove that our private  
 Meeters, who break off from the Church, and set up  
 Conventicles of their own, cannot be in a *Salvable State*!  
 That their Leaders for *interest sake*, dare not reprove  
 the Schism! That these practices caused the late Re-  
 bellion, and Murthers, and have *paganiz’d* almost all  
*England*! And dare none of these Men accept the  
 challenge? ’Tis a shrewd sign they suspect the good-  
 ness of their cause; else we should certainly have had  
 a *melius inquirendum*. We may presume those Men are  
 in crooked paths, who will not bring ’em to the rule,  
 when required to do so. Hence we will inquire;

Secondly, Into their Plea from *Conscience*, whereby  
 they would justify themselves every one in his own  
 way. Which *Conscience* is made the greatest cheat, and  
 the veriest fool in the World.

For Men espouse such, and such Opinions, and ways of Life; Whence they fly our Churches, Writings, and all other means of better Information, till by Custom, and the just Judgment of God, who gives them up to *strong Delusions*; that love not the Truth; they think there can be nothing true and good but what is wrapt up in their own Tenents and Practices. And because they have no mind to budg, therefore they cry *Conscience* will not let 'em. Which Conscience is mere *Opinion, Delusion, Prejudice* and *Self-will*.

Just such a *Conscience* as the greatest Hereticks, and their most deluded Followers had to plead for their damnable Opinions: And several Nations for their own Heathen Gods, and Sacreds. Such a Conscience as put the Jews upon Crucifying our Saviour, and stoning the Prophets; and spur'd on late Zealots to the worst Rebellion, Murther, Theft and Sacriledg. Such a Conscience as makes the *Scotch* Sectaries glory in their sufferings for their late Rebellion, and Inhumane Butchery of the late Arch-Bishop of *S. Andrews*: And put others amongst our selves upon acting the amazing Tragedy of 48 over again.

The greatest Villanies have ever been acted under the Pleas of *Conscience*: And never hath the World seen worse times, than where such Consciences have been most in fashion.

Look into the many Sects amongst us, and you cannot find any two of 'em, but what hold some things contradictory to each other: Yet every Man in all parties pleads *Conscience* for what he doth. Now because *Conscience* cannot make contradictories to be true; therefore it is not *Conscience* that makes all parties differ from the Church, and every one from one another; or if *Conscience* must be in the case, it is but an *Erroneous*



one, and that is to say, the *Errors and Delusions* of Men that make all this bustle. It is but the *Ass* under the *Lyons Skin*, a Spirit of Delusion under the *Pretexts* of Conscience, that hath made so many *Opinions*, falsely called *Religion* amongst us.

Conscience can never condemn a Man without some warrant or rule, *e. g.* It can never condemn any Man for Theft, had it not this or some such rule, viz. *Thou shalt not steal*, whereby to do it. Therefore in all the little parts of Religion and Government, which are not ordain'd in Scripture, and where there is no contradiction to those general rules of doing things decently, in order, and to edification, false Notions and Opinion may disquiet the mind, but Conscience cannot oppose, because she hath no rule, whereby to do it; nor any Foundation to ground an Accusation on. And consequently it is a Man's *Prejudice and Delusion*, not his Conscience, that draws back from *Common Prayer*, the *Sign of the Cross*, &c. because these things not being forbid in Scripture, Conscience cannot oppose and reject 'em.

At the rate these Men talk, we must allow every *Humor, Prejudice, Opinion, Fancy*, and *trick of Knavery* to be Conscience; the falshood of which sufficiently appears from the contradictions, palpable Errors, beastly Practices, and Confusions of Religion and Government, which such Consciences have already brought into the World, and do farther expose us to.

But if it be really Conscience that makes all this stir, Pray tell me how comes it to pass, that Conscience should scruple some things, which are no where forbid in Scripture, and yet so readily close with many that

that are expressly forbid? How can it be, that Conscience should boggle at a Surplice, and kneeling in the Sacrament of the Supper; and yet make no Bones of Schisms and Seditions? How is it reconcilable to my reason, that Conscience should fly mixt Communion, of which we have examples in Scripture, and which themselves can no way avoid; and also set Forms of Prayer, for which the Scripture affords both example, and Precept too: And yet should sport and solace it self, in *speaking evil of the King; resisting the Powers, &c.* Till I am satisfied in these points, I must conclude it is no Conscience: But Delusion in some, and in others mere tricks and design.

It is certainly now time for 'em to consider, that if the Evils which Divisions naturally produce should come upon us, what an heavy aggravation it will be to their sufferings, to consider that all this is the fruit of their own doings; and the work of their own hands? That their own *Passions, Mistakes and Self-will*, have pul'd all this upon their own heads? What excuse can they make to God and Man; what recompence to Posterity for the ruining a Church; the whole protestant cause and interest by a Division, which their best Writers condemn, themselves cannot justify, and are forced falsely to plead *Conscience* for, as their last and only refuge?

If any thing shall ever perswade these Men to look toward Unity; they must as a means thereto avoid all the hindrances of it. Many are self-conceited, and think none understand truth so well as themselves: Others self-willed, and resolved to yield in nothing: And yet for such Men to wish for Unity, is really to wish that the very Government would stoop, and all Men yield to their own selves. Nor is it some few only, but the Majority in every party that is of this mind: Which renders

renders a satisfaction utterly impossible ; unless they could make the Government like Manna to suit it self to every pallat. Therefore when *S. Paul Eph. 4. 3.* is pressing to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace* ; he direct 'em to the fittest means to that end, *v. 2. walk with lowliness and meekness, with long suffering and love : Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit.*

— All endeavours are like to prove unsuccessful without these Methods and Qualifications. For it is a censorious, hasty, proud and ungovernable Spirit, that leaves its rule, and follows its own giddy motions ; which makes the greatest breaches both in Church and State. Let Men lay aside all those humors which in the Judgment of any indifferent Man are inconsistent with any Government, as standing stubbornly irreconcilable to any but their own placits, and after all the complaints of *Grievances, Popery, &c.* they will certainly say of this Church and Nation, *Happy are the people that are in such a case.*

And indeed I did never yet know but that Men must part with something for the ends of Peace and Unity : They must in something deny themselves, restrain their passions, and yield to a rule ; else they shall live their own punishments, and at last be driven to what they would never go.